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TAGS: PGOV MOPS IR IZ

SUBJECT: MAYSAN IA OFFICERS: OPS GOING WELL, BUT GOVERNOR
MUST GO

Classified By: Acting Deputy Political Counselor Michael Ma for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) operations in Maysan went "better than planned," said 10th Iraqi Army (IA) Division Deputy Commander Brigadier General Jabar Nehma and 38th Brigade Deputy Commander Colonel Mustafa Khydair in a July 24 meeting with MND-C DCG-S COL Smith and poloffs. The officers praised U.S. assistance in the operation, especially air support, and expressed hope that the resistance "was in its last days." They said Maysan Governor Adil al-Maliki was "two-faced" and ultimately needed to be replaced due to his militia ties. However, they clarified that arresting the governor was a "decision of the state" and explained that Provincial Council (PC) Chair Abdel Jabbar had been released due to "a political decision." Both officers emphasized the necessity of providing services and jobs and said that until now they had seen no results from the 100 million USD development fund administered by the GOI. End Summary.

Operation Goes Better than Planned

¶12. (C) Asked about the ongoing "Tidings of Peace" operation, Jabar said "We expected some resistance, it went better than planned." He explained that Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) members realized they could not withstand a combined Iraqi-American assault, and repeatedly emphasized the importance of U.S. air support on Iraqi troop morale. Jabar said that the militia leaders fled elsewhere in Iraq or to Iran, while the rank-and-file discarded their weapons and "returned to their homes." Jabar also credited the planning of the IA, saying that they had assembled intelligence profiles on "everyone, especially the leadership," prior to the offensive. Jabar responded enthusiastically to COL Smith's offer of increased intelligence assistance from the U.S. with an Iraqi proverb: "We will cook our ingredients in a single pot and have a great meal." He confirmed that militias received Iranian support, but added "god willing the resistance is in its last days." Jabar added that most Maysanis were very happy with the U.S. and IA presence. "Originally, people didn't want to cooperate, but now we are getting many tips through our hotline number."

"Two-Faced" Governor Must be Replaced

¶13. (C) Jabar initially characterized the IA's relationship with Governor Maliki as "good" but later criticized him as a "man of two faces...he will say that he is backing away from JAM, but really he is under their influence." Jabar asserted that, according to intelligence reports, the governor obtained power through militia ties and should be arrested, but "that is a decision of the state." He warned U.S. officials that the governor "sees you as an occupier...you must be careful." Ultimately, he concluded, "the governor should be replaced, and yesterday would be better than today." Jabar said that Maysan Provincial Council (PC) Chair Abdel Jabbar had been arrested on July 2 due to his militia ties but subsequently released by a "political decision."

Kamal said that the Iraqi Supreme Court judges left on July 3 and that the IA was now working with the chief judge of Amarah to secure warrants. Jabar clarified that Governor Maliki maintains control of the Iraqi Police (IP) while the IA report directly to the Ministry of Defense. He was complimentary of newly-appointed IP Chief BG Saad Ali Ati and said the IA and IP had a close working relationship.

Need Services and Jobs

¶4. (C) Both officers emphasized the poor economic state of Maysan and the necessity of providing services and jobs. "Compare what you see in Maysan to the situation in Wasit, and tell the governor what you saw," urged Jabar. They said that they had seen no impact from the 100 million USD in development assistance pledged to Maysan, but added that it was still too soon to expect any results and that the effort was being led by Tariq Abdullah, not the Iraqi Army.

Comment:

¶5. (C) ISF and Coalition operations within the province have proceeded smoothly, although concerns remain over the threat posed by Special Group militants returning from Iran. Despite the officers' assessment of Governor Maliki, the fact that Maliki has not been detained and that the PC Chair was released likely indicate that the GOI has reached some sort of political accommodation with the provincial government.

End Comment.

CROCKER